## **Sports Concussions Podcast**

#### Introduction

Each year, approximately 3.8 million people will suffer from a sports or recreation related concussion. Many of these go untreated because the signs/symptoms of a concussion are not recognized. Many athletes are returning back to the field too soon and doing so can have terrible consequences. Jennifer Sturtevant, certified and licensed athletic trainer, is here to discuss sports concussions, treatment and some of the most common signs and symptoms so you can be sure to recognize a sports concussion when it happens.

#### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. And remember – just because you didn't lose consciousness, does not mean that you do not have a concussion.

## What are some of the most common signs/symptoms of a concussion?

Some signs and symptoms are not obvious with a concussion so it is very helpful to be familiar with the signs. The following are just some of the signs/symptoms that may occur with a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to or after hit or fall
- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right" or is "feeling down"

## What is the proper treatment?

Remove the athlete from play. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating concussions. A progressive rehabilitation program should be followed, supervised by the health care professional, to determine when return to play is appropriate.

## What are the risks if a sports concussion goes untreated?

If an athlete continues playing under such conditions, they risk serious, long-term effects, particularly if they suffer another head injury before healed. Ignoring concussion symptoms increases the risk of suffering a second, more serious, head injury that could result in life-threatening complications.

# There is a new Massachusetts State Law regarding a head injury safety program, what are these requirements?

The State of Massachusetts passed a law, effective September 1, 2010, that will require all school coaches, athletic directors, athletic trainers, doctors, nurses, marching band directors, parents of each athlete and parent volunteers at extracurricular athletic school events to complete a head injury safety training program.

## What should one do if they think they may have a sports concussion?

They should discontinue activity and be evaluated by a healthcare professional who will be able to confirm if they do or do not have a concussion or head injury. As stated previously, a progressive rehabilitation program should be followed, supervised by the health care professional, to determine if and when return to play is appropriate.